

A Short History of Natural Gas

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

Millions of years ago, the remains of animals and plants decayed and built up in thick layers. This decayed matter from plants and animals is called organic material. Over millions of years, as the soil and mud changed to rock, the organic material was trapped beneath it. Pressure and heat then changed some of this organic material into coal, some into oil, and some into natural gas. The main ingredient in natural gas is methane.

Many centuries ago the ancient people of Greece, India, and Persia discovered natural gas. These ancient peoples were mystified by the fires created when natural gas leaked from cracks in the ground and were ignited by lightning strikes. Occasionally they built temples around these burning springs and worshipped the fire.

About 400 BC the Chinese put natural gas to work. They piped natural gas from shallow wells and burned it under large pans to evaporate seawater to make salt.

Natural gas was first used to fuel street lamps in Baltimore, Maryland in 1816. In 1821, William Hart dug the first successful natural gas well in Fredonia, New York. That first natural gas well was only about 27 feet deep, shallow compared to today's depth of 5,000 – 6,000 feet! Natural gas is the third largest provider of energy in the United States. Petroleum and coal remain the largest providers of energy in the U.S.

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1. The city of _____ was the first city in the United States to use natural gas to fuel street lamps.
 - Boston
 - Boise
 - Baltimore
 2. Ancient people sometimes built _____ around burning springs created from natural gas.
 - stadiums
 - temples
 - gardens
 3. The _____ used natural gas to evaporate seawater to make salt.
 - Chinese
 - Greeks
 - Romans
 4. The first successful natural gas well in America was in _____.
 - New Jersey
 - New York
 - New Hampshire
 5. _____ is the third largest supplier of energy in the United States.
 - Natural gas
 - Petroleum
 - Coal
 6. The main ingredient in natural gas is _____.
 - oil
 - odorless
 - methane

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